

**Indiana Commission for Early Learning and School Readiness
Meeting Minutes for July 27, 2004**

ELSR Commission Members in Attendance:

Dr. Suellen Reed, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Rushville, co-chair
Mary Downes, Governor's Chief of Staff, South Bend, co-chair

Rep. Ralph Ayres, Chesterton, representing the House of Representatives
Sen. Gary Dillon, Columbia City, representing the Senate
Sen. Connie Sipes, New Albany, representing the Senate
Marilyn Schultz, Indianapolis, ex-officio, non-voting member (State Budget Agency)
Cheryl Sullivan, Indianapolis, ex-officio, non-voting member (FSSA)
Patricia G. Burton, Indianapolis, representing public school principals
Dr. Wendy Robinson, Fort Wayne, representing public school superintendents with
full-day kindergarten
Dr. Ena Shelley, Indianapolis, representing teacher training programs
Robert Marra, Noblesville, ex-officio, non-voting member, (Dept. of Education)
Mary E. Davis, Richmond, representing full-day kindergarten teachers
Pearl Prince, Gary, representing preschool cooperatives/early learning centers
Dr. Denna Renbarger, Lapel, representing directors of preschool cooperatives
Brent Leichty, Bourbon, representing parents
Marlane Rae Tisdale, Indianapolis, representing local school boards
Lynn Silvey, Pendleton, representing parents
Kay Harmless, Indianapolis, representing the Indiana Child Care Fund
Kim Dodson, Westfield, representing children with disabilities
Elvia "Annie" Porter, West Terre Haute, representing home care providers
A. Nanette Bowling, Kokomo, representing Head Start providers
Evelyn Ridley-Turner, Indianapolis, ex-officio, non-voting member (Dept. of
Correction)
Dr. Gregory Wilson, Indianapolis (Marion Co.), ex-officio, non-voting member
(Dept. of Health) Represented at meeting by Dr. Judy Ganser
Dianna Wallace, New Castle, representing the Indiana Association for the Education
of Young Children
Debbie Beeler, Mitchell, representing communities
Timothy Dunnuck, Bloomington, representing the Child Care Center (Indiana
University)
Dr. Carol Touloukian, M.D., Bloomington, representing pediatricians
Britt Magnuson, South Bend, representing curriculum development specialists
Dr. Maria Del Rio-Hoover, M.D., Evansville, representing child development
Gwen Long-Lucas, Hamilton County, representing "Y" early childhood programs

I. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Dr. Reed opened the meeting by welcoming the Commission members and by introducing Evelyn Ridley-Turner, Elvia “Annie” Porter, and Annette Bowling, Commission members unable to attend the June meeting. She reminded all that this meeting would be a work session. Dr. Reed verified with Commission members that the following materials had been received prior to the meeting: the July agenda, minutes from the June meeting, and information from the Trust for Early Education (TEE). A few members indicated that the information from TEE had not yet been received. Kathy Politz agreed to check with TEE and to have the information sent as soon as possible. Mary Downes introduced Ted Maple, who will work with Kathy Politz to staff the Commission.

II. ELSR Commission Work Plan

Mary Downes provide a brief explanation of the work session. She spoke to the timeline and the content that would be the focus for subsequent meetings. Mary referred to the work in progress around the inventory piece that was discussed at the last meeting. She described the Lt. Governor’s Peak Performance Project that is gathering state information needed for the inventory piece. The inventory of state projects and services will be done online and is currently undergoing a two-week test period followed by a six-week collection period. It is anticipated that the raw data from that project will in hand by mid-September, and ready to discuss at the October meeting. The Peak Performance Project covers state services. Throughout this process, additional work will be done with local inventories as well. The Colorado Model is being considered for this checklist of local resources.

Mary mentioned that the content for this meeting would be focusing on the “Pre-K – Kindergarten Strand.” Dr. Reed mentioned that Representative Ayers would share information from a local forum he held for his constituents in the work session.

Mary Downes introduced Cheryl Orr who served as a facilitator for the meeting. Cheryl explained how the work of this Commission as detailed in the Governor’s Executive Order and the recommendations of the Roundtable had been framed in order to expedite the charge at hand as the Commission moves towards the initial report due by December 31, 2004. She ran the Commission members through the “sorted” information strand-by-strand. The strands are as follows: (1) PreK and Kindergarten, (2) Professional Development and Reading, and (3) Collaborative Partnerships and Parents. Under each strand, Cheryl explained the four overarching principles. These principles were felt to be important pieces that are naturally embedded within each strand and the strategies under each strand. A copy of the strands, strategies and the overarching principles were provided to Commission members, and can be found on the Commission website at www.earlylearning.in.gov.

III. Work Session / Pre-K – Kindergarten Strand

Cheryl began by stating that she is not an expert in early childhood, but will be facilitating the meeting. She explained how the session would be organized – with overall discussion of the strategies followed by prioritization then by more detailed discussion. The purpose of the discussion will be to prioritize the top issues in each strand. Today the focus will be PreK-Kindergarten, August’s meeting will be about Professional Development and Reading, and in September group will discuss Collaborative Partnerships and Parents. Cheryl spent time talking about each separate strand and the accompanying strategies which were derived from the Governor’s Executive Order and the Educational Roundtable’s P-16 Plan. The strategies are also listed on the Commission website.

Cheryl Orr spent the most time describing each point of the PreK-Kindergarten strand, since that would be the focus of this meeting. She talked in detail about the Roundtable recommendations and how those recommendations came about. The strategies in this strand include:

- Voluntary preschool for academically at-risk
- Full-day Kindergarten
- Mandatory Kindergarten
- Kindergarten start date
- Transition from early learning to K-12
- Improve quality and coordination
- Ensure access

A discussion then began among Commission members about the PreK-Kindergarten Strand. The content of this first discussion is encapsulated below:

- Dr. Maria Del Hoover had concern about access for children ages 0-3 (i.e. screenings). Children with difficulties are not identified early enough. Pediatricians don’t have time or the support services in their office to do the screenings and work with parents on these issues. This issue has also been discussed within the work of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) as shared by Dr. Judy Ganser.
- Annette Bowling spoke about mandates of Early Head Start and Head Start to have a medical advisory council with pediatricians and support staff to talk about the importance of screenings. This has helped solve some of those issues.
- Wendy Robinson said that kindergarten start date, while critical, is irrelevant if 0-3 issues are not addressed. Dr. Reed said that once children are in school it is easier to know about potential problems. Dr. Reed spoke about the history of the kindergarten start date and the waiver policy. She stressed the need to “chunk” issues and prioritize, and that the purpose of this approach is to “flush” out what things are most important.
- Pat Burton asked about parent education, and Cheryl Orr pointed to specific sections of the strands, which came from the P-16 plan and Executive order (four strategies identified).
- Marlane Tisdale talked about “early childhood” as defined as birth through 3rd grade (not 0-6) by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She then spoke

about the history of Kindergarten issues in Indiana and the influence of Indiana's entrance age on people choosing to live in the state.

- Denna Renbarger mentioned that mandatory Kindergarten is not as important as full day. The issue of mandatory Kindergarten will take care of itself largely if full day is offered. Over 90% of children attend kindergarten. Quality is important, and there is no need to reinvent the wheel because we know what those indicators of quality are. Poor quality preschool is a concern.
- Sen. Dillon spoke about the quality of programs. He agreed with Dr. Renbarger about mandatory Kindergarten taking care of itself. If you have a quality program, parents will bring their kids. He also asked for clarification about the entrance date. He questioned whether the difference of July 1st and September 1st is significant. Some Commission members reacted to the question, and were in agreement that September 1st is the ideal time to start Kindergarten
- Carol Touloukian said she knows that preschool makes a difference for at-risk children, but asked about the difference that preschool makes for average, normally developing children. She also talked about older children (because of entry date) who seem to be more apt to get into trouble at school.
- Mary Davis spoke to today's Kindergarten as the "old" first grade and therefore the need for preschool to be the "old" Kindergarten. She notices the differences between children who attend preschool and those who do not. She talked about the difference between day care and preschool. Dr. Reed spoke about the importance of high-quality childcare and preschool.
- Kay Harmless reminded all that we should not be bound by time or money, but to frame our thinking around what is important for young children. She was glad to hear conversation in terms of 5-year and 10-year plans. Cheryl talked about other states that have implemented long-term plans.
- Marlane talked about the "push-down" curriculum on Kindergarten, and its impact on teachers' opinions about the entrance date.
- Dr. Ena Shelley added to what Marlane said about the start date, quoting Lilian Katz: "Having the oldest children is like the army mentality...we're looking for a few good men." There is no magical age. She said that a lot needs to be done in the area of professional development to get the curriculum where it needs to be. Dr. Shelley also pointed out that Indiana also has the oldest college students.
- Timothy Dunnuck talked about the need to be careful when talking about the difference between high-quality childcare vs. preschool. A good early childhood program has the same features. NAEYC criteria for accreditation can be applied to preschool, childcare, or kindergarten.
- Rep. Ralph Ayres shared about a meeting of approximately 29 people from preschool, childcare, and Kindergarten teachers who gathered in his town of Chesterton to discuss early childhood issues. Audrey Witzman, an early childhood specialist for the Illinois Department of Education helped to facilitate this group. Audrey relayed what is happening in Illinois in the area of early childhood. Reflecting upon the conversations of the day, Rep. Ayres reminded the Commission not to forget about children who are in the care of their parents (not in care of other adults). He pointed out that at-risk children are defined in various ways. Primary concerns in school (according to Kindergarten teachers) included: language development, life skills, responsibility, respect, interaction,

and conflict resolution. Children who come not ready are not necessarily from low-income environments. Rep. Ayers spoke about the gap in services for children who are not in poverty, but cannot afford high-quality programs.

- Annie Porter talked about professionalism of day care providers. She spoke about Building Blocks program being used in Vigo County (Terre Haute). This program provides a rating system to help identify quality programs. Parents can then choose programs based on the information provided by this voluntary rating system.
- Dianna Wallace talked about North Carolina as a national leader in voluntary rating systems. North Carolina has first invested in professional development. Indiana invests in professional development through the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) program. She stressed the importance of building upon the T.E.A.C.H. program. Dianna said that in this field the preferred terms are “early care and education.” She also spoke to wage issues with early care and education providers. The average early care and education provider makes between \$14,000 and \$16,000. The turnover rate of providers is between 60 to 72%. The Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC) focuses on professional development, turnover rate, and wages. Other states have invested in wage supplements. Licensed childcare centers are closing because of quality issues. Dianna emphasized the need to track within the state the number of childcare centers that are licensed but have been closed.
- Britt Magneson commented on the difficulty in meeting the Indiana Academic Standards within 2 ½ hours and providing a high-quality Kindergarten program. She stressed the importance of transition from early learning to K-12.
- Denna pointed out that Purdue research says that high-quality programs and standards can only coexist in full day Kindergarten, or alternate-day full-day kindergarten. Standards are not in contention with Kindergarten if appropriate practices and adequate time is offered.
- Dr. Wendy Robinson spoke about the rating system of the Early Childhood Alliance in the Fort Wayne community. Through the *Pathway to Quality*, there are connections made with families to assist them in finding quality programs. In-services are also offered to teachers and caregivers.
- Bob Marra asked if a rating system would add a burden that would drive out providers? Annie Porter talked about the flexibility of the Building Blocks System in Vigo County.
- Sen. Dillon spoke about New Jersey childcare providers who have to meet certain standards to receive state monies. Without putting money into it, (a rating system) would drive people out of business.
- Dianna responded that parents drive the rating system in North Carolina and the professional development to support it. The state spent 15 years of putting together a system for professional development. North Carolina has a five-star system based on: licensure, staff education, adult: child ratios, quality standards, and the score on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS). We need to ask, “Do we have opportunities available for individuals?” The first one being licensing – a minimum
- Dr. Touloukian said that parents must be empowered and take responsibility and be engaged in the process.

After the discussions, Cheryl Orr explained to the group the process of prioritizing the strategies within the PreK-Kindergarten strand. Each person was given three sticker dots and was asked to

place them on the chart next to the strategies they felt were most important. Commission members could put all three dots on one priority if they felt really strongly about it or they could vote for 2 dots on one and one dot on another, or a dot on three separate strategies. Prior to the making a choice of three key strategies by each Commission member, assurances were given that the other strategies were not going away, but were simply tabled for now. Commission members cast their votes in the “dot-ocracy”.

Prioritization results were:

- **Voluntary preschool for academically at-risk** - Make voluntary preschool available for children academically at risk (12 votes)
- **Full-day Kindergarten** - Support full-day Kindergarten for all children (34 votes)
- **Mandatory Kindergarten** - Make Kindergarten attendance mandatory (1 vote)
- **Kindergarten start date** - Provide Hoosier children with the same advantage children across the country receive by making the statewide age for Kindergarten entry comparable with other states (9 votes)
- **Transition from early learning to K-12** - Ensure that a system is in place in each community to facilitate a child’s transition from early learning to K-12 system (1 vote)
- **Improve quality and coordination** – improve quality and coordination of early education and school readiness services including child care (home and center-based), preschool, family support services and programs (14 votes)
- **Ensure access** - Make sure every child has access to high quality programs that help prepare them for school (early education and school readiness services including child care (home and center-based), preschool, family support services and programs) (16 votes)

Thirty minutes of discussion was opened up to the group about these top three strategies: Full-day Kindergarten, ensuring access, and improving quality and coordination. What follows are main points from the discussion:

- Lynn Silvey spoke about parent participation and education. Ensuring access should include ensuring that parents have adequate information. If parents were more empowered and informed, they would be more likely to advocate for the things that we want to accomplish.
- Marlane commented on the short-term nature of early childhood education. Parents are only invested in the issues as long as their children are in programs.
- Dr. Del Rio-Hoover stated that constituents need to have buy-in, and that they need to know about fiscal responsibility. We want the best programs for the money.
- Dr. Reed reminded the Commission that there is an oversupply of elementary teachers. Because of this it would be an excellent time to push to see if we can get some things done.
- Cheryl pointed out that actions would include moving people to support and understand the “why.” To create aggressive communication around the urgency and need for early education.
- Sen Dillon mentioned that he sent out a survey to his community members about issues. His constituents did not support full-day Kindergarten. Cheryl added that this is a “social marketing issue.”

- Wendy Robinson told the group that most people want to know what they are going to get out of it. She talked about the need for a slick public relations campaign, because people do not really understand the benefits. Denna referred to the Chamber of Commerce's report.
- Brit Magneson stated that she would like to add "high-quality" into any action plan. With that, we need a definition of "high quality." She also reminded the Commission members that not all parents want full-day Kindergarten, and that needs to be clear. Denna added that the idea was never to have mandatory full-day Kindergarten. They agreed that the word "option" should be added. Marlane discussed the importance for parents to have options.
- Sen. Sipes asked if we are going to get into that much detail regarding the commercial campaign. She shared that what needs to be done is just educate Indiana about the importance of early childhood.
- Cheryl spoke about learning from other states and organizations who have run similar public relations campaigns.
- Kay Harmless asked about the need to define the audience (parents, business, legislature, etc.). Cheryl said that other campaigns have implemented aggressive, segmented campaigns.
- Mary Davis inquired about having people come in to talk about other public preschool programs and the coordination of those programs.
- Wendy Robinson asked if we know what we already have in these areas.
- Dr. Reed reminded the group that the ongoing inventory will help. She spoke about the need to look at a measure for quality. The school districts offer full-day Kindergarten in different ways, and that data is being collected. She talked about the need to answer the question for people: "What's in it for me?" Now we know what to do, and should communicate and share that knowledge.
- Gwen Long-Lucas shared that the YMCA is the largest childcare provider in the country. The Hamilton County YMCA provides the "other half" of Kindergarten for parents in local schools. The Y is offering a lot of professional development.

Cheryl challenged the group to think about actions and policy recommendations around these issues, and to share their thoughts at the meeting next month when the three strategies of the PreK-Kindergarten strand is revisited.

III. Closing Comments / Adjourn

Dr. Reed asked for a motion to accept the minutes. The minutes were accepted. She praised the group for their contributions. Dr. Reed invited anyone who had not yet spoken to share any thoughts.

Evelyn Ridley-Turner, who represents the Department of Corrections, stated that since she gets those who are not successful, it is appropriate that she is here to add input. She knows the risk factors and consequences. A mandate has been given to not build more prisons, and can be met by investing in early education. She offered herself as a resource to Commission members.

Brent Leichty asked where he might obtain a copy of the National Parenting Standards. Cheryl stated that they would be added to the Commission website. *Note: The National PTA Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs are now posted, and can be found in the “Related Links” section.*

Sen. Sipes shared a book called *Class and Schools* by Richard Rothstein, which offers some data about things the Commission should be looking at.

Rep. Ayres encouraged others to invite a cross-section of people in early learning (and parents), as he did, to have healthy discussions locally on the topics.

Dr. Ganser shared that Department of Health’s ECCS project will hold forums statewide as well. The ECCS project will couple what they learn with the Peak Performance Inventory for the Commission’s use.

Dr. Reed closed the meeting at 3:32pm.